

Application No.: 10/803,225
Docket No.: 200309561-1

REMARKS

Applicants express appreciation to the Examiner for consideration of the subject patent application. This amendment is in response to the Office Action mailed December 17, 2007, in which pending claims 1, 4, 5, 14, 16, 17 20-22, and 27-30 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over a number of references. Claims 2, 3, 6, 10-13, 15, 18, 19, and 26 were stated to contain allowable subject matter, but were objected to for being dependent upon a rejected base claim. Claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of originally filed claim 2. Claim 17 has similarly been amended to include the limitations of claim 18. Additionally, new claim 31 includes the subject matter of claim 6, which the Examiner also indicated would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. The dependency of claims 3, 10, and 19 have been amended to reflect the amendments of claims 1 and 17. New claims 32-41 have also been added to provide appropriate dependent claims for new claim 31.

The specific rejections under § 103 set forth in the Office Action were as follows:

(1) Claims 1, 16, 17, and 22 were rejected as being unpatentable over European Patent No. 1,329,487 to Choy, et al. (hereinafter "Choy") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,536,893 to Kowalski (hereinafter "Kowalski") and U.S. Patent No. 6,585,366 to Nagata et al. (hereinafter "Nagata").

(2) Claims 4, 5, 20, and 21 were rejected as unpatentable over Choy in view of Kowalski and Nagata as applied to claims 1 and 17 and further in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0175983 of Ishikawa et al. (hereinafter "Ishikawa").

(3) Claims 14, 15, 27, and 28 were rejected as unpatentable over Choy in view of Kowalski, Nagata, and Ishikawa as applied to claims 4, 5, 20, and 21, and further in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0198885 of Tamagawa et al. (hereinafter "Tamagawa").

(4) Claim 29 was rejected as being unpatentable over Choy in view of Kowalski and Nagata as applied to claim 17, and further in view of Tamagawa.

(5) Claim 30 was rejected as unpatentable over Choy in view of Kowalski and Nagata as applied to claims 1 and 17 and further in view of the disclosure of Japanese Application No. 63178798 of Deguchi et al. (hereinafter "Deguchi").

It is respectfully submitted that the presently pending claims be reconsidered and allowed.

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Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner continues to reject pending claims 1, 4, 5, 14, 16, 17 20-22, and 27-30 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over a number of combinations of prior art references, as shown above. As noted above, none of claims 2, 3, 6, 10-13, 15, 18, 19, and 26 were rejected under any of the above §103 prior art rejections. As briefly described above, Applicants have amended claim 1 to include the limitations of previously presented claim 2, thereby effectively drafting allowable dependent claim 2 in independent form. Claim 17 has similarly been amended to include the limitations of previously presented claim 18, thereby effectively drafting allowable dependent claim 18 in independent form. Claim 31 has been added to include the subject matter of claim 6. As each of the remaining dependent claims depends directly or indirectly from either of currently amended claims 1, 17, or 31, and as such claims were indicated by the Examiner as allowable, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw each of the above rejections and allow all of the currently amended claims.

Since the Applicant is merely putting the claims in condition for allowance, the Examiner is urged to enter these amendments and allow the application in full.

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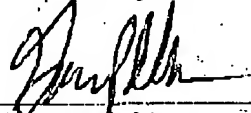
CONCLUSION

In light of the above, Applicants respectfully submit that pending claims are in condition for allowance. Therefore, Applicants request that the rejections and objections be withdrawn, and that the claims be allowed and passed to issue. If any impediment to the allowance of these claims remains after entry of this Amendment, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned so that such matters may be resolved as expeditiously as possible.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fee or to credit any overpayment in connection with this Amendment to Deposit Account No. 08-2025.

DATED this 1st day of February, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,



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